

CHALLENGE



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DA's Office Stonewalls on Racist Killing

BROOKLYN, May 21 — "Justice for Kyam Livingston — Killed in a Brooklyn Cell!" chanted the group that broke away from the picket line outside the Kings County district attorney's office here. The protesters entered the building and walked up the stairs. A group of suited security officers stood at the top. Kyam's mother, Anita, reached the very top of the stairs and faced the kkkop in charge.

He warned, "If you go in, you'll all be arrested."

"I have a petition here to give to the district attorney," Anita said.

"If you go in, you'll all be arrested," repeated the security cop.

Anita shouted, "Someone from the DA's office was there in January at our speakout, and again in March. And you said you'd deal with my daughter's case. But you didn't do anything!" She waved a bag full of signed petitions demanding prosecution of the New York Police Department jailers who refused her daughter, a 37-year-old mother of two, needed medical help.

The head security officer said, "You can't take them inside."

Anita took one of the petitions out of the bag and showed it to him. She said, "This is all we have. I just want to hand in the petitions for my daughter — it's my

daughter!" The rest of the group stood on the staircase chanting, "We want justice!"

The cops were unmoved and shouted, "You can't chant in here!"

Finally Anita said, "You're all full of s—t! You make promises, you get into office, and you don't care about ordinary people. You only care if a policeman is hurt or killed!"

Ten minutes later, we left the building and rejoined the picket line outside at 350 Jay Street, which houses two courts as well as the district attorney's office. A group of suits came out of the building, stared at our picket line, and talked among themselves. The picket line formed for a final rally and continued to chant "We want Justice for Kyam Livingston — Killed in a Brooklyn Cell!" and "We'll be back!"

Hundreds of "Justice for Kyam" leaflets were passed out prior to the attempt to storm the building and reach the DA's office to give him the petitions. About a hundred CHALLENGEs were distributed to the crowds on the street. The demonstration sparked many political discussions on the street between the protesters and passersby. Members of Progressive Labor Party put forward their analysis that racism and capitalism were the root causes of police terror and getting away with murder. When two teachers on their way to their union

office saw a teacher they knew at the demonstration, they said, "Keep it up. We'll see you later!"

Before the demonstration, members of our committee spoke on Kyam's case to the crowd on the street. We told how she had been arrested last July on a minor matter, became sick in a holding cell at Brooklyn central booking, and was callously denied medical care. After seven hours of intense suffering and begging for help with no response, she died in the cell. She was never accused of a crime, and no one has been held accountable for her death. The demonstration marked our tenth remembrance of Kyam's death.

Afterward, PLers involved in the struggle evaluated the demonstration. Although the rally itself was smaller than usual because it was during regular working hours, it was nonetheless inspiring. We spoke to many students from the local technical college and Westinghouse High School about the case and the horrors of capitalism, namely racism, sexism, and imperialist war. We try to insure that PLP's communist politics are not lost in the day-to-day details that are necessary in fighting reform battles. As revolutionary Soviet leader Lenin said about reform struggles, comrades should spend five minutes talking about heating the factory and 25 minutes talking about communism. We are struggling to follow that recipe for revolution.✱

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

★Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit black, Latino, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Russia, China, U.S. Battle. Workers Die in Pipeline Wars

Inter-imperialist rivalry is heating up between the U.S. ruling class and its two main rivals. The capitalist bosses of China and Russia are rapidly consolidating a bloc to extract Eurasia's huge oil and gas reserves. The fight over these strategic resources — and for military and economic domination of the world — will inevitably lead to the wider wars imperialists must use to settle their differences.

As the liberal AsiaTimes (5/1/14) pointed out, “All around Asia, China is pushing and probing at America's alliances, trying to loosen the bonds that have kept the countries close to Washington and allowed the United States to be the pre-eminent power in the region since World War II.” In addition, China has fast become the dominant economic power in Africa, surpassing the U.S. without investing a single soldier. Meanwhile, the U.S. spent a trillion dollars and deployed hundreds of thousands of troops in Afghanistan for 13 years, yet has suffered a big defeat.

As profit-driven bosses escalate their conflicts, the international working class suffers. Millions of workers and youth die in these wars. Hundreds of millions of others ultimately pay for these conflicts with mass poverty, constant wage and budget cuts, massive unemployment, destruction of homes, inadequate health care, and the most ruthless racist and sexist attacks.

For the working class, the only way out of capitalist hell is to overthrow this system, seize state power from the bosses, and destroy them with communist revolution. This is the road followed by the Progressive Labor Party. We are organizing our revolutionary party in more than twenty five countries toward the goal of eliminating the profit system at the root of all our problems.

To the Victors Go the Spoils

U.S. corporations once drooled over Afghanistan's profit potential. Now they're losing the spoils of war to China and Russia. In 2010, when the U.S. had more than 100,000 troops in the country, the U.S. Geological Survey scanned Afghanistan's mineral assets and found a trillion dollars' worth of mainly copper, lithium, and iron. But today the largest mining contract in the country is held by China, a \$3.5 billion deal to exploit vast copper deposits at Mes Aynak.

Referring to this contract and to President Hamid Karzai's May visit to Beijing, Afghanistan's state news agency said, “Chinese companies...enjoy a more positive relationship with Afghans [than the U.S.], making their investments less likely to be targeted for attack by insurgents” (Khaama Press, 5/19/14).

Pepe Escobar, who critiques global imperialism for the Asia Times, went so far as to declare (5/29/14):

In more ways than one, last week heralded the birth of a Eurasian century.... The \$400 billion Russia-China gas deal was clinched... in Shanghai, on Wednesday (a complement to the June 2013, 25-year, \$270 billion

U.S. Afghan Policy Spawns Heroin Epidemic

One count of our class's Afghan casualties lies mainly hidden. It's the thousands of U.S. workers and youth killed by the new heroin epidemic born of U.S. Afghan policy:

Opium cultivation is estimated to be at an all-time high in Afghanistan. Opium-poppy cultivation takes up 516,230 acres of land in Afghanistan, a 36% increase since 2012. [A] bout three-quarters of the world's illicit opium products originates from the country....The U.S.-led coalition shifted away from [eradication] in recent years, owing to a conclusion that crop destruction drove farmers and those dependent on them into the hands of the Taliban” (The Guardian, 4/30/14).

“Since 90 percent of the world's opium comes from Afghanistan, this [crop boom] effectively reduces the price worldwide” (Electric Valley Media, 5/29/14). Although most heroin enters the United States from Mexico, U.S. Afghan war policy makes it cheaper and more available than ever.

Illegal drugs serve the rulers in many ways. They steer rebellious workers toward stupor and sometimes death. They justify racist social control in the arrests and jailing of millions of mainly black and Latino youth. The U.S. bosses' phony war on the drugs they promote also militarizes Mexican border regions and terrorizes immigrants, another weapon in the capitalists' desperate campaign to suppress worker fight-back.

oil deal between Rosneft [Russian oil giant] and China's CNPC.) Then, on Thursday, most of the main players were at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum — the Russian answer to Davos [annual U.S.-led gathering with its capitalist allies]. And on Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin, fresh from his Shanghai triumph, addressed the participants.... St. Petersburg...made it clear how China wants to finance an array of projects in Crimea, whose waters, ...boasting untold, still unexplored, energy wealth, are now Russian property. Projects include a crucial bridge across the Kerch Strait to connect Crimea to mainland Russia;

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College Backs Off Armed Security Plan

No KKKops at RCC!

BOSTON, May 31 — An aroused alliance of students, faculty, and staff at Roxbury Community College (RCC) has turned back college bosses’ plans to put armed cops on this campus serving mainly black, Latino, and immigrant students.

News of the plan to bring in gun-packing police originally surfaced at a teach-in in late March where Progressive Labor Party gave political leadership. At a faculty meeting a day or two later, RCC Vice President John McLaughlin confirmed the plan and claimed the only reason there hadn’t been more violence at RCC was “dumb luck.” A job posting for a “sworn officer” with the power to make arrests was posted on the college website.

In response, students presented protest petitions to a joint meeting of the faculty and staff unions. The unions passed a resolution condemning both the armed police and the one-way glass that had recently been installed at the security office. Pizza and Politics, a student club, scheduled a public hearing on the administration’s pacification plan.

Beating a hasty retreat, RCC President Valerie Roberson sent out an all-college memo claiming that the impending arrival of armed police was merely a rumor. Most people saw the memo as her way of backpedaling on the issue, trying to maintain control and counter the unity and growing spirit of resistance among faculty, staff and students.

Despite considerable pressure to cancel the public hearing, Pizza and Politics went ahead with it. Several students argued that there was no objective reason for the administration’s move to more repressive security. Many expressed anger at McLaughlin’s remarks. A faculty member said that our community is made safe when people know and care about each other.

The hearing also gave students an opportunity to testify about their experiences with racist police terror. They warned that bringing armed police on campus would make them feel less safe. One student spoke passionately about having been recently beaten and arrested by Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority police for intervening on behalf of an elderly woman. PLers announced the New York May Day march and tied the issue of armed police to growing fascism in the U.S.

On April 15, the day after the hearing, hundreds of RCC faculty, staff and students attended an all-college meeting called by the administration. Roberson addressed several recent “reforms,” including the firing of top- and mid-level managers and the abrupt (if temporary) shutdown of a community ESL program.

On the matter of the armed cops, Roberson tried to use diplomacy to win our allegiance. She affirmed that despite the “confusion,” there would be no armed police on campus. This was certainly our victory, but by denying that this plan was ever in the works, she was trying to take it away from us. Led by militant students, we refused to let her off the hook, making it an even more solid victory for our class! Most people left the meeting encouraged and energized by the way we stood up to the administration.

For working-class organizers, there are many lessons to learn from these events. “Shared governance” — which gives the faculty and staff a voice and the illusion of democracy at the college — is being thrown out the window in favor of top-down, corporate-style management. This is happening due to the latest crisis of capitalism, which is forcing the bosses to rein in their public institutions and get more profits for their buck. This situation will open up opportunities for struggle,

but it will take bold students and workers’ organizing to seize them.

Since the 2006 shootings at Virginia Tech, armed police have been installed on campuses nationwide. The ruling class used this tragedy just as they used 9/11 to pave the way for the Patriot Act, as an excuse for more surveillance and militarization. The rulers are preparing for worker and student rebellions against the devastating cuts to our standard of living.

At colleges like RCC, the bosses will have a harder time getting away with it. Because of racism, black and Latino students have less entrenched illusions about U.S. democracy. They know all too well what it is like to be policed in AmeriKKKa. Crafty administrator/politicians like Roberson, who are black or Latino and often from working-class backgrounds, are highly useful to the ruling class to legitimize its agenda. Exposing Roberson’s political role will loosen the rulers’ hold over the RCC community.

Building communist consciousness — a long-term strategic outlook for creating a society without bosses, profits and racism, run by the working class — is crucial for strengthening the class struggle at RCC. Distracted, pacified and confused, many people at RCC do not yet see Roberson’s transformation of the college as a part of the move toward war and fascism. Nor do they see themselves as being able to make a difference in the bosses’ murderous plans.

It is a communist understanding that gives people staying power in reform struggles, where others either become self-serving or burned out. Now we need to sharpen and expand the class struggle at RCC. PLers need to focus on building a regular CHALLENGE readers group that can explain what is happening around the world and how it relates to our own college.✊

China-Ru\$\$ia Deal Follows U.S. Afghan Defeat

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expansion of Crimean ports; solar power plants; and even manufacturing special economic zones (SEZs). Moscow could not but interpret it as Beijing’s endorsement of the annexation of Crimea.

The St. Petersburg meeting had a decidedly militaristic thrust, according to attendee Escobar:

One day before the clinching of the Russia-China gas deal, President Xi Jinping called for no less than a new Asian security cooperation architecture, including of course Russia and Iran and excluding the U.S.... Xi described NATO as a Cold War relic.

U.S. Rulers Losing Gas Pipeline Control

Even worse for U.S. bosses, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project — the main reason for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan under President George W. Bush — seems to be slipping into Moscow’s hands. President Bill Clinton launched the TAPI scheme in the 1990s. A consortium led by the Union Oil Company of California, or Unocal (now a Chevron subsidiary), was designated as the pipeline’s prospective operator. U.S. oil interests needed cooperation from the Taliban, which then controlled 90 percent of the country — and which was avidly seeking recognition by the U.S. government. But the pipeline negotiations skidded to a halt in 1998, after Taliban ally Osama bin Laden directed the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Clinton declared the Taliban enemies of the U.S. Attacks on the U.S. mainland followed with 9/11, something CHALLENGE warned about a year before.

The Clinton administration chartered the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, known as the Hart-Rudman Commission, in 1998. On January 31, 2001, seven months before 9/11, the Commission released its report and pointed the way forward for U.S.

imperialism. Noting that U.S. workers had opposed foreign interventions since the U.S. defeat in Vietnam in the 1970s, the report argued there was only one way to gain support for a war for oil: through an attack on the homeland. Lo and behold, it happened. The bosses were able to mobilize for the invasion of resource-rich Afghanistan and, six months later, for intervention in Iraq.

While ExxonMobil and Chevron have current bids on the table for TAPI rights, they have stiff competition:

[Russia’s] Gazprom has expressed an interest in building the... pipeline, in addition to its interest in ultimately connecting its gas fields in Russia’s Altai region to TAPI. Beyond this, proposals for building a Rosneft oil pipeline parallel to TAPI, or even a Gazprom gas pipeline next to it, are being considered. Essentially Indian companies want to bring in Russia as stakeholder in the energy corridor they seek to create between Central Asia and India (World Politics Review, 5/10/14).

The U.S. is drawing down their original 100,000 troops in Afghanistan to an announced 10,000, including 6,000 Special Forces and possibly mercenary contractors. Should Russia and India move in with their joint TAPI-type pipeline, they will have to provide their own security along that corridor. That could put them in direct conflict with U.S. forces, which “have abandoned more than 90 percent of the 600 bases they once held” (Wall Street Journal, 6/2). The U.S. will use its remaining bases to launch drone attacks in Pakistan — and kill even more innocent civilians.

Afghan Fiasco v. Obama’s Spin

Through all of this, Obama is feebly trying to spin U.S. imperialism’s Afghan fiasco as a successful pacification. On May 28, he told newly commissioned West Pointers, “We are winding down our war.... You are the first class to graduate since 9/11 who may not be sent into combat in Iraq or Afghanistan.”

Three days later, Obama announced a prisoner swap with the Taliban that freed a U.S. soldier who had gone missing — or deserted — five years ago. He continued the spin: “Families across America share in the joy.” He triumphantly envisioned a “hard-earned peace within a sovereign and unified Afghanistan.” As the New York Times (6/1/14) reported, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl had departed for Landstuhl Medical Center in Germany eight hours earlier, but that did not stop Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel from taking a figurative victory lap” around Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan “to celebrate the release of the lone remaining American prisoner of war in the Afghan conflict.”

For the world’s workers, the Bush-Obama Afghan invasion has proved a disaster. Post-9/11 combat there needlessly killed at least 8,000 working-class U.S. and NATO soldiers from Britain, France, and other EU countries, and more than 20,000 Afghan civilians. Innocent Afghans are still being slaughtered by drones. And thousands of GIs are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and battle wounds while they wait for months and even years for treatment in a dysfunctional Veterans Administration system.

Workers’ Trump Card: International Unity

Desperate to fend off the emerging China-Russia alliance, U.S. rulers will pull out all stops to win U.S. workers to support a potential war against these imperialist rivals. Look for more racism directed against Chinese people in the U.S., along with assaults on Muslims worldwide. The bosses’ attack black, Latino, Muslim and immigrant workers in an effort to divide and weaken the working class and drag down conditions for all workers.

PLP’s answer is to organize the international working class against the murderous capitalists. Our Party says, Workers of the world, unite! Smash all borders! Join us!✊

NYU's Racist Slave Labor Campus

If any evidence was needed to demonstrate that universities in the U.S. are run as corporations, one need only examine the latest example involving the largest private university in the U.S., New York University. They follow four capitalist principles: making profit, teaching their ideology, fueling racist division, and bilking the students.

NYU has built a campus in the city of Abu Dhabi in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates (UAE), a U.S. ally. The UAE is “an oppressive regime which has been accused of torturing prisoners [and] looking the other way at abusive labor conditions for migrant workers” (NY Times, 5/27). Much of the UAE lives off of the super-exploitation of South Asian workers, who live in prison-like labor camps.

Much of the UAE The Times reported (5/19) that these racist conditions suffered by an all-South-Asian migrant workforce who built this campus included “workers being arrested, beaten and deported for going on strike, being charged a year’s wages to get their jobs, and being denied access to their travel documents.”

This campus is part of a campaign guided by NYU’s racist president, John Sexton, “to transform the university into an international...platform with hubs around the globe — the equivalent...of a far-flung multinational corporation. He was supported in that ambition by a who’s who of corporate America accustomed to seeking growth abroad” (NYT, 5/27).

A public letter from a group of NYU faculty declared that these “global ambitions were motivated more by the bottom line for NYU — which has raised nearly \$6 billion during [Board of Trustees chairman Martin] Lipton’s tenure than [by] education” (NYT). CEO Lipton

“has made his career as the top advisor to corporate boards during mergers and acquisitions as a founder of Wachtel, Lipton, Rosen & Katz.” Such are the “educational” resumés of the governing boards of U.S. institutions of “higher learning.”

Wall Street's Campus

Hours after the exposé was published, “Mr. Lipton went into full crisis mode and sent an email to...member of NYU’s board, which is stacked with Wall Street boldface names [more “educators”?] like Laurence Fink of BlackRock; the hedge fund impresario John Paulson; and a Home Depot founder, Kenneth Langone” (NYT). He said he had been “unaware of the reported abuses and that an ‘independent’ investigation would” begin.

NYU president Sexton followed this by saying that “the contractors responsible for the...problems weren’t under the university’s control.” But this turned out to be unadulterated racist garbage. “The general contractor that helped oversee the construction of the campus isn’t some fly-by-night firm outside NYU’s purview” but “is run by a trustee of NYU’s board [emphasis added]: Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak, the chief executive of the Mubadala Development Company.”

Racist Al Mubarak persuaded Sexton and the Board to build the campus, “with a \$50 million donation from the government of Abu Dhabi.” Mubarak is chairman of Abu Dhabi’s governing executive council. Faculty member Mark Miller said Sexton’s “contractor” response “was a classic exercise in damage control, meant to distance NYU as far as possible from the horrific wrongs inflicted on those workers, and — therefore — divert attention from the fact that ...Al Mubarak is not some faraway rogue operative but an NYU trustee” (NYT). Confirming

that characterization, NYU spokesman John Beckman said, “Mr. Al Mubarak is a respected member of the NYU board and his membership is not in question.”

'Global Clip Joint' Bilks the Students

Some NYU faculty members objected to the new campus and said Sexton’s initiatives have “led to one of the highest tuitions in the country and soaring debt levels for its students.” The aforementioned faculty public letter declared that, “Any school that profiteers so avidly is sure to be renowned...as a global clip joint with an academic logo.”

NYU is not alone in running a university like a corporation. The presidents of numerous colleges have become millionaires, not to mention the football and basketball coaches. Their huge salaries that help rake in hundreds of millions from the colleges’ sports programs that help pay these salaries and the perks.

Under capitalism, education is a big business that reaps huge profits. It teaches the principles that govern a racist profit-making system, much of it on the backs of its students, their debts and the banks that collect the interest on that trillion-dollar debt. The exorbitant cost of education is increasingly freezing out the working class from any schooling that might enable them to get a decent job.

But, again, capitalism is designed to oppress the working class, not uplift it, in the U.S. as well as in the UAE. We need a profit- and boss-free system, run by and for the working class communism. Workers will collectively run the schools, teach ideas benefitting our class and enable everyone, regardless of area of origin, to fulfill their potential in all fields of endeavor.✽

Communist Revolution Will End Imperialist Wars

The enactment of fascist labor, education, tax, and energy reforms demonstrate the nature of a capitalist system, designed to benefit the bosses and attack the working class. There are no legal ways to enact changes for workers’ benefit.

The bosses’ mass media tells us that the majority is in charge and the laws are just, but in reality the electoral process is completely controlled by the business, financial and political oligarchy. Therefore only those in this oligarchy can get access to power through the vote. Similarly, the rule of law is an illusion, when the same minority of millionaire parasites determines what’s legal, and can change laws to benefit their businesses, as with structural reforms here in Mexico.

When the electoral farce and bourgeois legality are not enough to control working-class rebellions, the bosses resort to the police and military to repress, jail, and murder dissenters. Capitalists use fascist terror against the working class to violently impose their interests on the majority.

The bosses believe that the illusion of bourgeois democracy and fascist terror can prevent the unity of the working class, but they are mistaken. Eventually, millions of workers will unite to build an international communist movement to abolish capitalist oppression and exploitation.

During the last century, the working class made significant advances in the Soviet Union and China by putting into practice its strategy to take power from the bosses. Essential to this strategy were the organization of a revolutionary communist party, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But, its achievements, the old communist movement also had shortcomings. The most important was that even when the workers held political power, revolutionaries limited themselves to the administration of a capitalist economy: Salaries and money

were never eliminated, and production was mainly focused on responding to the needs of the market instead of responding to the needs of the working class. The ideological base of this error was the lack of confidence in the working class — that had struggled for the socialist transformation of Russia and China — to accept communist ideas and practices. These errors led to the return of capitalism.

Understanding the failures and successes of the old communist movement are the key to improving our practice in the struggle against capitalist oppression. Revolutionaries believe and practice criticism and self-criticism, as inheritors of the communists of the last century. The members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) call on the workers of the world to once again raise the communist red flag.

We have learned that the struggle should not have stages, must go directly to communism. We must forge a single worldwide communist party, the PLP, as there is only one international working class. We need only one party. The revolutionary struggle to defeat our oppressors cannot be an electoral process or an alliance with a boss or a progressive politician; revolution is necessarily violent and involve millions of workers, students, and soldiers.

Currently, imperialists are readying for global war. The fall of the old communist movement left the working class at a disadvantage to face this period, but the sharp struggle against reformism and revisionism (capitalist ideologies in red clothing), along with our commitment to free our class from capitalist exploitation, eventually will bear fruits.

While the bosses get ready for war, we workers must prepare for a communist revolution. Read and distribute CHALLENGE! Organize our circles of study action!✽

FBI Covered Up Plot vs. Occupy Wall Street

U.S. bosses’ National Security Agency and other agencies have been spying on other capitalist leaders and scooping up huge amounts of e-mails and phone records around the world. They are up to their necks in spying and sabotage against workers fighting back. In fact, even they are ready to commit murder, or at least stand by while it happens.

While investigating Occupy Houston, the FBI found a plot to assassinate its leaders, but made no attempt to warn them. A plot probably organized by the FBI’s friends.

The information emerged partly from a graduate student’s Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) document. The government is now refusing to reveal the rest of the information, on grounds that Occupy is a terrorist group. A Houston judge has called that absurd, and ordered them to prove it or provide the papers, although they probably won’t comply (*Houston Chronicle*, 3/18; *Vice* magazine, 3/21).

Meanwhile, a separate investigation in Olympia, WA, has exposed a coordinated effort on the part of the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, all three branches of the military, and 16 other local and national police agencies to infiltrate the Port Military Resistance Movement and Evergreen College Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The exposures prove an FBI campaign to spy on and suppress the Occupy Movement — something widely believed, but vigorously denied by the Obama Administration.

A 2009 FOIA request filed by SDS members revealed the man they knew as “John Jacobs” was actually John Towery, a member of the Army’s Force Protection Service (*Democracy Now*, 7/28/09). Now an SDS lawsuit has revealed an email sent by Towery saying he was trying to “develop a leftist/anarchist mini-group for intel sharing and distro [independent publishing source]” with police departments in Everett, Spokane, Portland, Eu-

gene, and Los Angeles. He even repeatedly tried to convince SDS members to stockpile guns and suggested that they engage in domestic terrorism, so he could entrap them (*Democracy Now*, 2/25/14).

Spying on the Left is nothing new. In 2004, Drake University in Iowa was subpoenaed by a federal prosecutor to turn over records from an anti-war conference it hosted. This led to the exposure of police infiltration of anti-war groups in Fresno, CA, Grand Rapids, MI, Boulder, CO, and Albuquerque, NM (*Salon*, 2/11/04).

In 2007 the *New York Times* revealed that the NYPD had extensively infiltrated Left groups prior to the 2004 Republican National Convention as part of a massive surveillance operation (3/25/07). This spying operation continued well past the Convention, at least until 2008 (*Guardian*, 3/23/12). The memoir of Minnesota cop Richard Greelis bragged about his state’s massive infiltration of Left groups prior to the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul.

During student protests over budget cuts in 2010-11, campus police infiltrated groups at the University of Washington and UC Davis to spy on student activists. (KIRO7, 4/20/10; California Aggie, 3/10/11)

All this only skims the surface of the capitalist class’s surveillance state. COINTELPRO, a surveillance and disruption program started by the FBI in 1956, included surveillance, police frame-ups, and assassinations in effort to destroy the Left in the U.S. (Ward Churchill, *COINTELPRO Papers*, 1990). COINTELPRO supposedly was stopped after it came to light in 1971, but recent revelations prove it’s still alive and well. These incidents show that the capitalist class will stop at nothing in order to maintain its economic and political power.✽

Fascist Movement Sweeping France and EU

PARIS, May 26 — The fascist National Front (FN) party is the big winner of the European Parliament elections, held yesterday. The French ruling class might opt for fascism in the foreseeable future if its election circus is not strong enough to enforce its economic and political will.

In any case, however, workers have no stake in voting for one or another of the bosses' electoral parties. Our class can never achieve liberation under capitalism. Only destruction of the profit system and its state through communist revolution can enable the working class to free itself from the oppression, exploitation, racism, sexism and imperialist wars of capitalism.

While according to a Harris poll, only 43 percent of the electorate cast ballots, the FN received 25 percent of the vote, the conservative Sarkozy-led Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party got 20.8 percent, and the Socialist Party (PS) 14 percent. Given the low total vote, the FN's figure represents 11 percent of those eligible. It will send 25 deputies to the European Parliament, ten times the number it previously had.

While the media emphasized the far-right totals as an anti-European Union (EU) vote, it played down the fact that the election in France really represents a groundswell of racist hatred against black Africans and Arabs from the Maghreb (North Africa). It was part of an anti-immigrant, racist and neo-Nazi vote that swept across Europe. In Britain, as in France, the far-right won a quarter of the balloting. In Hungary, the deeply anti-Semitic Jobbik party finished second. In Greece, the anti-immigrant neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party won seats in the EU parliament for the first time.

In France, the two "respectable parties of government" — the UMP and the "lesser evil" Socialists — are greatly discredited. Since the Socialist defeat in the March municipal elections, Socialist President François

Hollande has made a turn to the right, naming racist Manuel Valls as the new Prime Minister. Valls is infamous for saying, while mayor of Evry, that too many black faces at the municipal flea market gave the town a bad image.

In April, the governing Socialist Party voted an austerity package featuring cuts of 50 billion euros to government programs that mainly aid poor workers, a wage-freeze for government workers and 55 billion euros (75 billion US\$) in annual tax breaks and reductions in social security contributions for French corporations — all to help them compete better against rivals in other imperialist countries. So workers no longer believe in the Socialists. The UMP is embroiled in a major scandal and workers do not see it as an alternative either.

According to Joël Gombin, a researcher for the Fondation Jean-Jaurès think tank (linked to the Socialists), while the top fascist leaders, Marine Le Pen and Florian Philippot, based their campaign on hostility to the European Union, trying to make their fascist party "respectable," the main motivation for FN voters was to express their racism.

According to a May 25 Ifop poll, 88 percent of FN voters said "immigration" was the determining issue. But in 2012, only 193,600 immigrants came to France. Clearly, the issue is not the number of people immigrating to France. Actually, of the country's 63 million population, 12 million first- and second-generation immigrants live in France (2008 figures) and 8.3 million are citizens. The 4.7 million people who voted for the FN in the EU elections want to expel these people for purely racist reasons.

The Communist Party (PCF) was the largest party in France after World War II. Today, after decades of class collaboration, it is just another election machine run by and for careerists. The Left Front, an alliance of the

PCF and other fake left parties, won only 6.3 percent of the EU Parliament vote. The absence of any communist leadership has allowed workers to be won to the racist idea that immigrants are their enemy, not the bosses. Voters over 60, who experienced the 1968 general strike, voted least for FN, only 21 percent.

The ruling class has already experimented with fascist mobilizations, notably two "grass-roots" movements. One was the violent anti-tax "red bonnet" protests in Brittany in February, in which local bosses organized their employees to protest. The other was the anti-gay "Manif pour tous" (Demo for all) protests that began in 2013. They brought out hundreds of thousands of right-wing Roman Catholics, and on Feb. 2, 2014, were infiltrated and manipulated by fascist thugs.

In the near future, it is probable that the extra-legal fascist groups that gravitate around the FN will be emboldened to attack blacks, Arabs and leftists.

So now the French ruling class has two options. Either it can rely on the "respectable parties of government" to impose austerity on the working class — François Hollande has already stated that his government will not change direction. Or, if Hollande's Socialists and the UMP are too discredited and too weak to enable the ruling class to enforce its austerity, the rulers would drop the mask of democracy and move to out-and-out fascism.

All this could result in a UMP-FN electoral alliance in the 2017 presidential elections. Like Hitler's Nazi party in 1933, the fascist FN would come to power "legally." Only the emergence of a true communist party could lead the working class out of this morass of capitalism's election fraud, smash the fascists and topple the ruling class with communist revolution.✊

From Ukraine to Vietnam Nationalism Puts Workers into Bosses' Camps



Two news stories today show the peril workers face if they buy into nationalism of any kind (New York Times, May 16, 2014). Nationalism, patriotism, is a boss's lie. In eastern Ukraine, steelworkers and miners in the companies owned by the billionaire Rinat Akhmetov put down tools and, led by their managers, occupied their city Mariupol as militias against the pro-Russian secessionists. Akhmetov says secession will bring sanctions that will destroy his businesses and the workers' jobs. So unity of Ukraine is this billionaire's slogan now and he has turned the workers into his private soldiers to enforce Ukrainian nationalism. Forget that tomorrow he might go in the opposite direction. "If you want to keep your jobs, fight for me," the boss means.

What these workers have done is follow their boss down the path of nationalism. It delivers them into the bosses' hands, and not just in the obvious sense that they have become cops and soldiers in Akhmetov's private pro-Kiev army. Worse, it sets them up for war with other Ukrainian and Russian workers, in their own city, in the Ukraine, in the whole Eurasian region. It delivers them into the hands of rival bosses, rival imperialists allied with local capitalists, to be used as cannon fod-

der against other workers flying different bosses' flags. Every flag save the red one is a boss's flag.

The U.S. and Europe support Kiev and Ukrainian nationalism as weapons against their rival imperialist, Russia. If you join Akhmetov's militia to protect your job you are doing nothing but offering your services to Western imperialism against Russian imperialism. You would do better to think about turning imperialist wars like the one shaping up in Ukraine into a class war of workers internationally against all bosses of whatever camp. You would do better to take over the mills and mines from Akhmetov and call on Russian workers to join you in overthrowing their bosses too. You have the power to do that, as the quick pacification of the city by organized industrial workers showed. But you also need the communist politics of workers' unity across all ethnic and national borders to use that power for our whole class. And that means turning your back on nationalism, on all nationalisms, as PLP argues. Patriotism is a boss's lie.

The other story is from Vietnam, where anti-Chinese nationalism turned violently racist.

One Chinese laborer said angry Vietnamese workers had stomped on his hands, crushing them. Another said his son had been struck in the head with a metal rod by a Vietnamese mob that had sought out Chinese for beatings. At least one Chinese worker died (NYT).

This is a tragedy for our class. Both Vietnamese and Chinese workers are exploited by bosses of many nationalities, and nationalist strife between them only serves the exploiters on both sides. When Vietnamese workers turn from attacking foreign-owned factories to killing foreign workers, they show the ultimate peril of nationalism for our class. It is class suicide for workers to turn on one another like this, to define one another as "foreign," to kill one another for a boss's lie.

The fact that two generations earlier both Vietnamese and Chinese workers fought for communism together makes this tragedy most bitter. What a falling off from the line of the Vietnamese communist poet To Huu: "For the Party's long life/together we march/with the same heart." Now it's the task of communists to revive that beating heart of proletarian revolutionary internationalism. We know it will need the same heroism that To Huu's nephew Little Huom displayed, dying in battle "in a jet of blood":

*His cap askew
he whistled away
like a warbler
on a garden path*

Even the most tragic moment has its beauty, because Huom's red song goes on like the life of humanity itself. That is why he fought, and why we fight on in his name.

In Vietnam the inter-imperialist rivalry is between Western and Chinese imperialism, with Japan at the moment on the Western side. Vietnam, so heroic in its defeat of first the French then U.S. imperialist armies, will be crushed under the feet of these elephants if they do battle. The U.S. and Japan want Vietnam to side with them against China. There is nothing but destruction for workers in Vietnam if they follow any of these bosses. Sisters of Vietnam, turn your back on suicidal nationalism. Show us again as you did in my youth, you who "don't need a beard to be a hero" (To Huu), how communist workers fight for a human future!

Old Comrade

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Contract Work in Israel: Legalized Human Trafficking

For the last 14 years, I have been a contract worker-clearing office buildings in Israel. The work is both physically hard — I am on my legs all day long, and can sit down only during the 30-minute break — and underpaid. Contractors are paid only the minimum hourly wage (about \$7 U.S.), and the benefits are the legal minimum. Many contractors try to give their workers even less, withholding pension contributions and payments for annual leave. Often I have had to fight to get what was due me.

I work with a woman from Eritrea. Although she has a work visa and her employment is legal, she gets paid on the 15th day of each month instead of the 10th. Contract workers who do not know their rights well or do not speak Hebrew can find themselves openly exploited.

Even when employment conditions and benefits are technically legal, contractors try to increase their profits at our expense. In many workplaces in Israel, for example, coffee is provided at the employer's expense and is readily available at all times. Some worksites even provide subsidized lunches. But at the place I work, neither I nor the security guards (who are also contract workers) get any coffee — we need to beg for it from offices in the building. We must bring lunch from home.

To take our legally required paid leave of one day per month, we have to ask multiple times. Sometimes the contractor "forgets" to pay for it and has to be chased to get what we are owed. This happened to me during the week between the two Passover holidays.

On my current job, my pension payments were supposed to begin three months after I started work. But I received them only after six months, and then only when I went on my own initiative to remind the contractor what he owed me.

I do not get paid for breaks. I work nine hours a day, but get paid for only eight and a half hours. This means that I lose 275 Israeli New Shekels (ILS) a month, or \$79 U.S., a considerable sum for someone making minimum wage.

When I started cleaning an office twice a week for an hour each time, the cleaning supplies were at the office's expense. The contractor only had to pay my salary. My agreement with the contractor was to be paid at an overtime rate for these hours, or about \$8.25 U.S. But the office owner paid the contractor \$17 U.S. per hour. The contractor made more than I did for this work! After repeatedly having to chase the contractor for my pay for these hours, I made an agreement with the office manager to be paid directly for the work at an hourly rate of \$11.50 U.S. And the money was paid on time.

★ ★ ★ ★

I am telling my personal story here, but I am one of hundreds of thousands of contract workers in Israel, in both the public and private sectors. In 1996, with the ratification of the Mandatory Tendering Law, contract employment for government jobs became the accepted norm. The idea was to pass the responsibility for the workers to a third party, namely the manpower contractor. In practice, the contractor gets paid a high sum for each worker, of which only part goes to the worker's salary, while the contractor pockets the balance in return for trafficking in workers. Neoliberals claim this is "more efficient" than direct employment by allowing the government to deal with governing while the contractors specialize in cleaning the office and other jobs.

In reality, however, this is no more efficient than the old way. The main reason for the contract system is union-busting and circumventing collective bargaining agreements. Contract workers are excluded from any existing agreements, which makes the workers more vulnerable to exploitation and also weakens the union. Moreover, these workers have no job protection and can be fired without cause. The contract system enables the Israeli government to bust the unions and employ workers for starvation wages while enriching the contractors and ducking responsibility for illegal working conditions.

In one case, I was paid in cash, which enabled the employer to avoid making contributions to National Insurance, the Israeli equivalent of Social Security, as required by law.

I am a member of the Coalition for Direct Employment, which fights for the direct employment of all workers in the Israeli market, with the pay and benefits

accorded to workers by law, and the freedom to unionize. Eventually we are aiming to create a strong union, a collective contract protecting the workers from harmful employment, and fighting for revolution.

This is what I experience as a worker on a daily basis. I am not a slave, I am a worker!

Two Fighting Workers

Sexist Honor Killings: How Religion Criminalizes Women

In Pakistan, a pregnant 25-year-old woman was recently stoned to death by her father and brothers for the "crime" of marrying a man her family disapproves of, and violating the tradition that marriages be arranged by her family rather than by herself and her spouse. This vicious murder was committed in broad daylight on a public street with many onlookers. It was justified by her father as an "honor killing," in which the victim of the crime of murder was accused of being the perpetrator of a supposedly greater crime, adding insult to extreme injury.

Farzana is one more target in this outrageous practice of the oppression of women that in 2013 reportedly took the lives of 869 women in Pakistan. It also reveals a pathological lack of love within families, or at the very least a relative devaluing of love in the face of religious custom. Her father, the murderer-in-chief, stated baldly that he had no regret about killing his daughter.

Honor killings have been a part of many societies over the centuries, and in the modern world they still persist. How can communists change this horrendous practice that is generally accepted as justifiable among large segments of a society — no doubt including segments of the working class? It is the ultimate in divide-and-conquer when even families produce systematic and justified killings of one member by another.

The Bolsheviks in the early part of the 20th century sent many volunteer women to the Muslim sections of the Soviet Union in Central Asia to live among women there. They encouraged a change in their thinking about commonly accepted practices that put women into fourth-class citizenship. Many women accept this role in the form of head- and face-coverings, walking behind their husbands in public, and other displays, though that is beginning to change. Many women in the Muslim sections of the working class are standing up to these practices in public, but many are also paying with their lives for doing so.

It is vital that communists find ways of transforming entire social practices that are deeply rooted and deadly to the working class as a whole, not just to the women who are directly oppressed.

Saguaro Rojo

My First May Day: Awesome!

My first New York May Day was awesome in every possible way. I never knew so many people from so many different ethnic backgrounds could be so united. As we marched through the streets of Brooklyn, NY, we caught the attention of many people.

Many people began to engage in the march as well. It made me feel so good when people from Brooklyn's streets began to march with us. PLers' speeches were

so heartfelt and touching. I believe they reached into most of the Brooklyn people's hearts. It was as though the speeches were coming from their hearts.

Going to my second May Day ever and other meetings with my comrades, I now know a little bit more about the PLP. I am against this capitalist system, where these companies and bosses make profit off the working class which suffers while these bosses eat and live well.

I'm also against these imperialist wars for oil, especially against these racist police departments everywhere. Young people are dying all around this world due to racist KKKops while they get off scot free. I've learned the only solution is a communist revolution. Fight back! The revolution is on the way!

An inspired marcher

Tech Companies Behind Racist Murder

On July 16, 2011, Kenneth Harding, Jr. was riding on the T-train in San Francisco. Two cops boarded the train and immediately singled out Harding, a 19-year-old black youth, for the aggressive fee-checks that have become standard in the city. They pulled him off the train at which point Harding tried to flee. The cops gunned Harding down outside the station. While the youth lay dying on the ground the police stood over him, weapons drawn, refusing to allow paramedics or bystanders to render aid, letting Harding bleed out on the sidewalk. Harding had been murdered over a \$2 train fare.

Harding's racist murder has become a symbol of the class struggle in San Francisco. In order to make up for budget shortfalls over the last five years, the city has engaged in stricter fare enforcement on public transportation, complete with police stings which focus on poor black and Latino neighborhoods.

The budget shortfalls plaguing the city were not a natural result of the current depression, but of a conscious city policy to transfer wealth from the urban poor to tech companies as part of the city's economic development strategy. Massive tax breaks have been given to companies like Spotify, Zynga, and One Kings Lane, with the shortfall then foisted on the working class.

In a particularly glaring example, Twitter was given a \$56 million payroll tax break in exchange for a \$388,000 donation to city charities and a \$60,000 credit for "promoted tweets;" a net loss to the city of \$9.259 million per year. (*Salon*, 2/19/14)

City transit has been under constant attack by the tech industry. "Google buses," named after the largest supplier of the private bus service, have been operating in the city for the last decade. This private bus service uses non-union drivers (a not-so-subtle attack on the unionized city system) to ferry tech workers from San Francisco to the outlying Silicon Valley.

The Google buses have also helped themselves to the use of public transit bus stops, a crime that is consistently enforced against working people, but ignored in the case of the tech industry. The non-enforcement of the \$271 fine has cost the city between \$500-600 million over the last ten years while the private buses have blocked bus stops, delaying and congesting public transit.

After a year of growing protest, the city was finally forced last month to charge tech companies \$-per-stop along their routes (a plan developed by the tech industry itself). The charge is half the fare that each individual rider is forced to pay on the public transit system and results in a net loss of \$270 per stop to the city if they would just enforce currently existing laws.

But that's the point: the law does not apply to the capitalist class, it only applies to workers. As journalist Julia Carrie Wong notes, "Google and its ilk have always known that they could break the law right up until the day they were invited to make new laws. That is the power of corporate wealth, and in San Francisco as in the rest of the country, it rules supreme." (*Salon*, 1/23/14)

Kenneth Harding was murdered over a \$2 bus fare. He had to pay so that Google wouldn't have to. The working class deserves better. The working class needs communism. The ongoing protests against the tech parasites in San Francisco are great, but the working class is going to need revolutionary politics to escape the hell that is capitalism once and for all.

Revolutionary Worker



What's the Ruling Class? In A Capitalist State, Capitalists Rule

When communists talk of a "ruling class," many people smugly dismiss it as a paranoid conspiracy theory.

The wealthiest top 1 percent of earners in the U.S. controls a larger share of the national wealth (35.4 percent) than the bottom 90 percent combined (23.3 percent). And their share is growing. Between 1985 and 2010 nearly three quarters of all wealth gains went to the top 5 percent with the bottom 60 percent seeing a net loss. (EPI, *The State of Working America*)

The current economic crisis is accelerating the funneling of money and wealth to the top. A study by Emmanuel Saez found that between 2009 and 2010 (the first year of the supposed recovery), the top 1 percent seized 93 percent of all income gains, validating former treasury secretary Andrew Mellon's 1929 statement that "In a depression, assets return to their rightful owners" (*Striking it Richer*, 3/2/2012).

A new study in the forthcoming issue of *Perspectives in Politics* (Fall 2014) shows that the ruling class shapes public opinion policy. The authors, Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, studied 1,779 national policy initiatives pursued between 1981 and 2002 in the U.S. comparing elite opinion with that of the general public and then analyzing which direction policy went. The results are indisputable:

"In the United States... the majority does not rule — at least not in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes. When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites and/or with organized interests, they generally lose... even when fairly large majorities of Americans favor policy change, they generally do not get it."

When the working class does get a policy they generally favor, it is "only because those policies happen also to be preferred by the economically elite citizens who wield the actual influence." Any feeling of political efficacy among individual workers is purely coincidental. Ultimately the policy preferences of the working class "appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, sta-



D-Day (1944): It was the Soviets, not the U.S.-U.K. bosses that smashed the Nazis.

tistically non-significant impact upon public policy."

Gilens and Page's study conclusively shows that individual capitalists and business lobbyists (representing organized groups of capitalists) shape the political landscape in the U.S. In short, a ruling class of individuals making up only a tiny segment of the population wield most—if not all—formal political power. This finding is bolstered by a recent report done by Demos, a research and policy center, breaking down support for raising the federal minimum wage. The study found that while 78 percent of the general public (the bottom 99 percent of earners) support a hike in the minimum wage 60 percent of the wealthy (the top 1 percent) oppose it. Thus, when Congress recently refused to move on a bill to raise the minimum wage, they were simply

carrying out their mandate to represent the capitalist class.

Of course this is nothing new. In the mid-19th century Marx wrote that all states, no matter what their superficial appearance (democracy, monarchy) are in essence class dictatorships. In a capitalist state, capitalists rule. Those capitalists who wield the most influence make up the ruling class. As the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John Jay stated upon the country's founding, "The people who own the country ought to govern it." It is indisputable that in the U.S., a very small percentage of people own most of the country and they govern it. The ruling class may conspire, but they are no conspiracy theory.☺



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

U.S. trains Afghan torturers

NYT, 5/13 — KABUL, Afghanistan — A family's accusations that the police in Kandahar tortured and killed their son while he was in custody has again focused attention on a wave of disappearances and deaths in the southern province....

Hazarat Ali, a 23-year-old plumber...had been arrested after being accused of fighting with a neighbor.

"The police are stealing and torturing innocent people..." said Abdul Ghani, Mr. Ali's father.... "When I found him in the morgue," Mr. Ghani said, "I saw he was beaten up and strangled to death....His buttocks and back had been beaten with cable rods, and there was a clear, deep line on his neck that showed he had been hanged...."

A January 2013 report by the United Nations...on torture by the Afghan intelligence and security forces found that from September 2011 through October 2012 there were 81 such disappearances in Kandahar Province alone, and...bodies found in Kandahar city bearing wounds from execution-style shootings.

A medal for drone 'warriors'?

NYT, 5/21 — In February 2013, the Pentagon announced plans to create a new award — the Distinguished Warfare Medal — for drone..."cyberwarriors," which would rank above the Purple Heart and Bronze Star....[for] a drone pilot flying a mission from an armchair in Nevada....

After a public outcry...the Pentagon relented and the award was canceled.

Racist budget cuts to follow new college rating system

NYT, 5/26 — ...The rating system is in fact a radical new effort by the federal government to hold 7,000 colleges and universities accountable...[that] receive a total of \$150 billion each year in federal loans and grants...

The rating system...would compare schools on fac-

tors like how many of their students graduate, how much debt accumulates and how much money their students earn after graduating...Schools that earn a high rating on the government's list would be able to offer more student aid than schools at the bottom.

[The rating system] would elevate financial concerns above academic ones and would punish schools with liberal arts programs and a large number of students who major in programs like theater arts, social work or education, disciplines that do not typically lead to lucrative jobs.

[Many college presidents] also predicted that institutions that serve minority and low-income students, many of whom come from underfunded schools and have had less college preparation, would rank lowest in a new rating system...

Ms. Munoz [director of the White House Domestic Policy Council] said...a rating system...could be unveiled by the end of the year....

Pay up or go to jail

NYT, 5/21 — User fees are a fact of life in America.... But such fees are increasingly being levied on people caught up in the criminal justice system, who are overwhelmingly among the poorest members of society....

Fees show up...from arrest to prosecution to conviction, and often long after any sentence has been completed. Defendants are charged for pretrial room and board in a local jail (\$60 to \$70 a day); for renting an electronic monitoring bracelet (up to several hundred dollars a month); for the collection of their DNA samples; and...for a court-appointed lawyer — even though free legal assistance for criminal defendants who can't afford it is a constitutional right.

One Michigan man who pleaded guilty to forging a drug prescription was assessed \$1,000 in fees...— \$500 went to pay his public defender and the other \$500 went toward unrelated courthouse expenses such as phones, copy machines and a gym for county employees....Fees are set...regardless of any finding of guilt or a defendant's ability to pay.

States add insult to injury by piling interest on these charges, sometimes called the "poverty penalty....In

some cases, people are sent to jail simply for failing to pay a fine on time....

Any millionaire can become president

NYT, 5/16 — The assets of President Obama and his wife, Michelle, were valued as high as \$7 million last year....

Treasury notes held jointly by the president and Mrs. Obama are...worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. The forms only require the Obamas to list their assets and income in wide ranges, leaving it difficult to discern the exact amount of a couple's worth in 2013.

The endless war

NYT, 5/29 — To the Editor:

Again and again, the can is kicked down the road. Now it's two more years, which brings the grand total to 15. Yet another promise — to bring the troops home in 2014 — broken. Afghanistan is a quagmire, and President Obama is obviously content to leave the mess in his successor's lap. Meanwhile, the carnage continues, and the backups at the V.A. hospitals and psychiatric centers get ever longer.

GM profit trumps morality

NYT, 5/21 — To the Editor:

....That General Motors has been concealing safety problems with its cars should come as no surprise. There is a long history of this practice at G.M. and the other car manufacturers. One can recall exploding gas tanks in Ford Pintos, stability problems with Corvairs and the uncontrolled acceleration in Toyotas.

Concealment of safety problems...is not limited to automobile manufacturers. Many corporations do a cost-benefit analysis, comparing the cost of fixing a health and safety problem with that of possible litigation. And when there is litigation, there is often an out-of-court settlement in which the victims are forced not to disclose the terms of the settlement....It would seem that profit trumps morality in these situations....

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

Schools Under Capitalism Serve Only the Bosses

This is excerpted from a speech intended for May Day by a comrade in Newark fighting the bosses' education reform.

It's a pleasure to speak with all of you — men and women, workers and children, all passionate for the same shared cause of justice and equality, which is why we meet here today. While we celebrate the message of May Day and the long road to progress set forth by those who came before us, we mustn't forget the current struggle faced by workers and the other social ills that face the U.S. in politics, the economy, and general society. In the spirit of this and the Progressive Labor Party, I would like to take a moment to talk about a very pressing matter that I believe hasn't been discussed enough and that has personally affected me, my friends, and millions of others, both in my city and the rest of urban America.

As a Brazilian immigrant, my mother came to this country in search of a better life — not only for her, but for her future children as well. Even in the present day, public education in Brazil is ineffective and lackluster, to say the least. Schools are often overcrowded, stocked with underpaid teachers and lacking the much-needed resources needed to teach students in the 21st century. This and many other problems that face Brazil are often sourced to governmental corruption, an insatiable thirst for greed that has halted the advancement of Brazilian society and only now is being seen with indignation. Although my mother was lucky enough to go to one of the best public schools in Rio de Janeiro, she knew that it was going to be nearly impossible for her to afford a college education while working for a measly wage. This is why she moved to start her life here in New York.

And yet the situation in the United States hasn't been much better. From inner-city schools in Queens to the suburbs of Long Island and even the West Coast, I have seen how the quality of U.S. education has gone down because of the stifled school funding, both for the curriculum and after-school activities. It has unfairly fired hundreds upon thousands of teachers due to budget constraints. It has completely ignored the voices of an outraged student body, one already crippled by a weak economy and soon to be burdened by massive debts incurred simply from trying to get an education.

The actions of Superintendent Cami Anderson in Newark are only a microcosm of a trend sweeping the country in recent years. As U.S. imperialism begins to show its decline against rivals like China and Russia, U.S. lawmakers and politicians have started to resort to any means necessary to stay competitive. For years, the elite U.S. educational mentality has sought to keep the middle- and lower-income classes in subservience, and this is only going to get worse through an oppressive institution that forces you to conform to its discipline, no questions asked. There are extreme examples in my own city, with some charter schools putting impressionable young children in submission through draconian policies, making the school less a place for academia and more like a behavioral facility.

Now it's the time to fight. Not only do we need unity and will power for social change, but a unity in our message. Everybody affected by the education system must be in the know, for the sake of knowledge and strength in resistance; only through communication can there be power. We don't want indoctrination of the common people by the whims of an elitist, privileged class that has no care for the likes of me and you. Join me in the fight against intellectual degradation and don't give in to apathy. Be reactive and proactive to the threats of the capitalists. Seize the hammer and sickle in your work, but bring a pen to the fight; without the brain, the brawn becomes meaningless. Lead the battle with your mind!

Friend of PL

Not Just Anderson, It's the Whole System

Historically, Newark has had a lot of conflict. Whether it is political, racial, or religious, the city has gone through its rough times. Newark Public Schools, the largest school system in New Jersey, has had Cami Anderson as superintendent since 2011. Anderson had launched the One Newark reform initiative, which includes shutting down and consolidating schools. Though masses of parents, teachers, students, and even ministers have been protesting One Newark, little has changed. The One Newark Plan closes some traditional schools, lays off over 1,000 teachers while hiring Teach for America recruits, and creates a single enrollment system for Newark's 21 charters and 71 traditional public schools.

The effects of Anderson's plan have already been felt in Newark's predominantly black and Latino schools. She has effectively put 22 schools on the chopping block since 2013. Each of my classes are filled with 25 or more students (my AP World History class has 30 students). Class sizes are too big and we protested in outrage. Yet, Anderson fails to attend community meetings, budget meetings, and meet any of our demands. Her plan ultimately hurts every

facet of the working class of Newark, but it hurts students the most. Her decision to suspend four principals who spoke out against One Newark at a community meeting wasn't a great move either. Her One Newark Plan simply privatizes Newark Public Schools in order to suck the life out of the working class before they even begin to work. The community will not go down without a fight.

Our teachers participate in Fight Back Fridays. The Newark Student Union organized protests where hundreds of students walked out of school to protest in front of the superintendent's office. Parents asked her, "Wouldn't you want the same opportunity for my black baby as yours?" Just last week, 77 local ministers from all over Newark highlighted the needless chaos that the One Newark Plan has left the community in. Everyone but a select few are in outrage and are openly informing Anderson so, but she still fails to tell the community the benefits of privatizing schools, other than making her friends a lot of money.

High School Student

Religion: Better Life After Death? Communism: Better Life Now!

After May Day, a few comrades and I went to dinner with some of our friends and family. An interesting discussion was sparked by a comrade's brother. He asked if I saw any connection between religion and communism, after I shared the story of my conversion from Christianity to communism and the Party. Here was an opportunity to put dialectical materialism into practice: No two things are totally alike or totally different.

One thing that distinguishes communism from religion is that religion is a tool used by the bosses to keep individuals subordinate to the ideology, interests and values of exploiters and to the dictates of the exploiter-ruled state. While some religions preach a "liberation theology," often the liberation sought is encased within the confines of capitalism, urging only for reform and not necessarily to overthrow the system. Marxist philosophy (dialectical materialism) promotes critical, scientific thinking, and encouraging workers to not only analyze our oppression, but to break the chains that bind us.

As for similarities, the com-

rade's brother proposed that both religion and communism unite people for a common cause and creates community. We all want to belong; to be accepted; to feel we are a part of something greater than ourselves. I agreed and added that the true sense of community is lost under the culture of individualism (a culture nurtured by capitalism) and it is only offered, superficially through things such as organized religion.

As we marched down the streets of Flatbush, Brooklyn, one of the chanters from the sound truck paused to point out the fact that there were several churches on each block. This, he said, was the hope that capitalism had to offer: a hope that life would be better after you die. The capitalists want us to believe that prayer changes things, but we know that while prayer and meditation may bring mental comfort to suffering, struggling people, it will not change the inhumane conditions that millions of workers suffer under capitalism every day.

There are many things that

people find attractive about religion. I remember the days of being in church and feeling a sense of awe and enlightenment. I felt like I had a purpose and that nothing happened by chance; it had been predestinated. I believed that God would hear my cries and answer my prayers whenever I called for help.

Now I am an atheist, a communist, and a member of the Progressive Labor Party. I still feel a sense of awe and wonder when I consider the beauty of nature and my connection to all living things. I may not have a divine purpose, but I have set a purpose for my own life, choosing to be a part of something greater than myself by joining with others in a fight for a better world, a world with no rich and no poor; a world with no masters and no slaves; a world where the workers share what we produce and we all have a chance to develop ourselves to our full potential; a communist world! Now that's what I call, heaven.

A Dialectical Materialist

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